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ENG 3807-001: Victorian Literature

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VICTORIAN LITERATURE

Victoria's Secrets: Sex, Crime, & Empire

Prof. R. Beebe
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Coleman Hall 3841

Office Hours:
M, W 10-12
T, R 11-12:30
& by appointment

course description

The Victorian Age is alive and well in the 21st century. From popular television series (Ripper Street, The Paradise, Whitechapel, Sherlock, and Penny Dreadful) to recurring film adaptations of novels by Dickens, the Brontës, and Hardy, to the rise of steampunk and neo-Victorian fiction, our culture remains transfixed by the Victorians. But what's behind this cultural appropriation of a past age? What can it teach us about the real Victorians and ourselves?

In this course we will read Victorian literature against the backdrop of today's fascination with "Victoriana" in order to understand who exactly these Victorians were and to speculate on our own contemporary culture's appropriate of Victorian Britain.

We'll do this work by reading a variety of works across a range of literary genres. In particular, we will map the nineteenth-century British obsession with sex, crime, and empire as we study how these stories portray Victorian

**"This strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims."**

—Matthew Arnold *The Scholar Gypsy* (1853)

Britain as a society of extreme contrasts. On the one hand, it witnessed an unprecedented outpouring of inventions, scientific advances, and humanitarian reforms, backed by an array of outstanding literary and political figures. On the other hand, it practiced harsh economic policies at home (resulting in chronic poverty for most of the population) and maintained severe imperial policies across its worldwide empire.



The Lady of Shalott, "The Moment of Catastrophe" 1857, William Holman Hunt

TEXTS

- :: *Lady Audley's Secret*, M. Braddon (1862)
- :: *Jane Eyre*, C. Bronte (1847)
- :: *Dracula*, B. Stoker (1897)
- :: *Fingersmith*, S. Waters (2002)
- :: *Understanding the Victorians*, S. Steinbach (2012)
- :: **Other Readings** (via D2L)

REQUIREMENTS

- :: 2 Papers 35%
 - Paper 1 (4-6 pages) 15%
 - Paper 2 (6-8 pages) 20%
- :: Presentation 15%
- :: Response Papers & Quizzes 20%
- :: Final exam 15%
- :: Participation 15%

course format

While this course has clear aims to help your intellectual understanding of literary history and cultural studies, I see this course as primarily as a reading course—meaning course activities (inside and outside of class) will be devoted to help your understanding of the material as to assess your progress.

To do well in this course, you will need . . .

- to be prepared for—and contribute actively in—class discussions;
- to complete all outside reading and related activities (such as online quizzes, brief response papers and associated research);
- to complete your major writing projects on time and in accord with assignment guidelines;
- to work well with others—in completing the presentation assignment and in responding to others' ideas in class discussions;
- to be on time and attend each class session.

attendance policy

You need to attend every class session. I generally allow two absences—no questions asked. On the third absence—and for every absence thereafter—I will deduct 5% from your final grade. Six or more absences equate to an automatic “F” for the course. For any day that you are not in class, it is your responsibility to find out what was covered, new assignments given, changes in the syllabus, or any homework due for the next meeting.

submitting papers

You will use D2L to submit all written assignments. Unless you have made previous arrangements with me, I won't accept papers emailed to me. Please observe the due dates (and time of day) so you can submit your work before the dropbox closes (though I usually allow a 30-minute grace period).

Minor writing assignments (including response papers) are meant to be completed at a particular time in order to track your reading progress and facilitate class discussion. Therefore, unless you have an excused absence or have made previous arrangements with me, you may not turn these assignments in late.

Major writing assignments may be turned in late; however, without prior approval for late submission, you will lose a letter grade for each calendar day they are late.

classroom etiquette

You're welcome to bring your notebook computer/tablet to class. However, I ask that you observe common rules of etiquette and decorum when you use it. In brief, you may use it to take notes or complete an in-class writing activity. You may not use it for anything not directly related to class work. Also, please turn off (or mute) cell phones. Out of respect for the class and the integrity of class activities, absolutely no text messaging during class is allowed.

assignments

Since the focus of this course is helping you read as much as possible, almost all class activities and outside assignments are designed to facilitate your comprehension of the material and class discussion. You will be writing (frequently) response papers as well as other brief writing projects.

You will also prepare a presentation for the class (working in a small groups) on a topic related to the Victorian period.

You will also write two formal papers (one due before spring break; the other at the end of the semester).

You will be provided written assignment sheets for all projects. (Available on D2L.)

conferences

The reading for this course will be challenging at times. Therefore, it is important for you to come to my office and talk to me if you feel you need some extra help or if we didn't get a chance to discuss your particular concerns during class time. Also, feel free to talk with me about your writing projects. I will be happy to look over your work or help you brainstorm.

Also, all discussions about absences, possible absences, missed work, or anything else of this nature should be conducted in a conference. **Please don't email me about these matters.**

electronic writing portfolio

This course is a writing-centered course and, as such, your papers satisfy the requirements for the Electronic Writing Portfolio. If you plan on using work from this course for your EWP, I ask that you complete this before the last two weeks of the semester.

students with disabilities

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

reading schedule

You can find the reading schedule on D2L. Please check D2L often to note any changes to the schedule, which are usually announced in the News item

plagiarism

Since the university is a place of ideas, discussion, and reflection, it views plagiarism—the taking of others' ideas as one's own—very harshly. The penalty for plagiarizing is swift and severe. You will receive an immediate F for the course and notice will be given to the Office of Student Standards.

If you have any questions about plagiarism—however small—please talk to me before you turn in your work.

EIU Catalog Description ~

Study of British literature 1830-1901 with emphasis on such topics as aesthetics, gender, empire and race, class, religion, science, and labor. Writers may include Carlyle, Arnold, Tennyson, Browning, Eliot, Dickens, the Brontes, Gaskell, Hardy. (Group 3B) WI Credits: 3

University Learning Goals ~

In this course, students will engage with all areas of EIU's University Learning Goals, including (but not limited to) the following:

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|-----------------------------|--|
| Critical Thinking: | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Asking essential questions and engaging diverse perspectives.2. Seeking and gathering data, information, and knowledge from experience, texts, graphics, and media.3. Understanding, interpreting, and critiquing relevant data, information, and knowledge.4. Synthesizing and integrating data, information, and knowledge to infer and create new insights5. Anticipating, reflecting upon, and evaluating implications of assumptions, arguments, hypotheses, and conclusions. |
| Writing & Critical Reading: | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Creating documents appropriate for specific audiences, purposes, genres, disciplines, and professions.2. Crafting cogent and defensible applications, analyses, evaluations, and arguments about problems, ideas, and issues.3. Producing documents that are well-organized, focused, and cohesive.4. Using appropriate vocabulary, mechanics, grammar, diction, and sentence structure.5. Understanding, questioning, analyzing, and synthesizing complex textual, numeric, and graphical sources.6. Evaluating evidence, issues, ideas, and problems from multiple perspectives. |
| Speaking & Listening: | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Collecting, comprehending, analyzing, synthesizing and ethically incorporating source material.2. Adapting formal and impromptu presentations, debates, and discussions to their audience and purpose.3. Developing and organizing ideas and supporting them with appropriate details and evidence. |
| Responsible Citizenship: | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Engaging with diverse ideas, individuals, groups, and cultures.2. Applying ethical reasoning and standards in personal, professional, disciplinary, and civic contexts. |